

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

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AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

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C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 1795

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GY

SUBJECT: GUYANA'S INSECURITY AND NON-ALIGNMENT

REF: GEORGETOWN 1761

SUMMARY: GOG OFFICIAL, IN DISCUSSION OF GUYANA'S NON-ALIGNED POSTURE, HAS INSISTED TO ME THAT IMPORTANT MOTIVATIONS BEHIND GUYANA'S STRONG COMMITMENT TO NON-ALIGNMENT WERE FEARS FOR THE SECURITY OF GUYANA'S BORDERS AND FEARS OF DESTABILIZATION. OFFICIAL INSISTED THAT FEARS BY BURNHAM AND EVEN WILLS OF DESTABILIZATION THREAT WERE GENUINE. THEY HAD FEARED THAT US WAS NOT WILLING TO ACCEPT A SOCIALIST GUYANA AND WOULD ATTEMPT TO PROCEED AGAINST IT AS IT DID AGAINST CHILE. SOLIDARITY WITH THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT, AND THE SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST COUNTRIES WOULD GIVE GUYANA A DEGREE OF POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC PROTECTION.

END SUMMARY.

1. DURING DISCUSSION OF NASC WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY COUNSELOR

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SEARWAR (REFTEL), THE CONVERSION TURNED TO WHY GUYANA HAS SUCH

A STRONG COMMITMENT TO NON-ALIGNMENT. SEARWAR ATTRIBUTED IT PRIMARILY TO THE FEARS THAT BOTH BURNHAM AND FONMIN WILLS HAVE CONCERNING THE SECURITY OF GUYANA'S BORDERS AND OF THE POSSIBILITY OF "DESTABILIZATIN" BEING DIRECTED AT GUYANA. BY BECOMING A SOLID MEMBER OF THE NAM GUYANA WOULD HAVE FRIENDS TO ASSIST HER POLITICALLY

FOR EXAMPLE, LAST SPRING, DURING THE FUROR IN THE VENEZUELAN PRESS CONCERNING GUYANA, THE NIGERIANS INQUIRED WITH VENEZUELAN AS TO WHY THEY WERE "JUMPING ON GUYANA", AND THIS, THE GOG LEADERS FELT, HAD A RESTRAINING EFFECT ON VENEZUELA.

2. WILLS AND BURNHAM HAVE BEEN FEARFUL, SAID SEARWAR, THAT THEIR DECISION TO DEVELOP A SOCIALIST ECONOMY WILL PROVOKE A UNITED STATES REACTION SIMILAR TO THAT USED AGAINST ALLENDE IN CHILE. SUCH REACTION MIGHT INCLUDE ENCOURAGEMENT OF GUYANA'S IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORS TO ASSERT THEIR TERRITORIAL CLAIMS, OR IT MIGHT BE MANIFESTED IN SOME OTHER VISIBLE OR INVISABLE FORM OF DESTABILIZATION. THUS, REPORTS OF US ARMS SALES TO SURINAM PROVOKED ANXIETY IN THE GOG. THE FEARS AND INSECURITIES TROUBLING GUYANA'S LEADERS ARE GREATER THAN ONE WOULD LOGICALLY EXPECT, AND THEIR NET EFFECT HAS BEEN TO MOTIVATE GUYANA TO SEEK CLOSE TIES WITH MEMBERS OF THE NAM AND TO DEVELOP FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST COUNTRIES.

3. COMMENT: SEARWAR WAS EMPHATIC IN INSISTING THAT "DESTABILIZATION" WAS A REAL THREAT IN THE MINDS OF BURNHAM AND WILLS. WHEN I SUGGESTED THAT THEIR USE OF ISSUE MIGHT HAVE BEEN PRIMARILY INTENDED TO FOSTER INTERNAL UNITY AND DISCIPLINE, AND THAT THEY COULD NOT SERIOUSLY BELIEVE THAT THE US WAS INVOLVED IN ANY ACTIVITY TO UNDERMINE BURNHAM'S LEADERSHIP, SEARWAR DISAGREED, CITING AS EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY AN ARGUMENT HE AND WILLS HAD HAD IN FRONT OF A MEETING OF GUYANESE AMBASSADORS LAST JANUARY OVER WHETHER THERE WQS ACTUALLY "DESTABILIZATION" TAKING PLACE. HE INSISTED THAT WILLS AND BURNHAM TRULY FEARED THAT THE US EITHER HAD OR WOULD ENGAGE IN "DESTABILIZATION" AGAINST GUYANA. ALTHOUGH BURNHAM HAS USED THE "DESTABILIZATION" ISSUE TO HELP CREATE NATIONAL UNITY, I ALSO BELIEVE, BASED ON TALKS WITH GOG OFFICIALS AND OTHERS HERE, THAT BURNHAM AND WILLS HAVE ENTERTAINED SUSPICIONS THAT THE UNITED STATES MIGHT BE ENGAGED IN SOME SORT OF ACTION AGAINST GUYANA.

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4. THE FACT IS THAT GUYANESE LEADERS ARE ONLY SLOWLY BEGINNING TO REALIZE THAT THAT THE UNITED STATES CAN TOLERATE A SOCIALIST GUYANA, PROVIDED IT IS NOT ALIGNED WITH THE SOVIET UNION OR CUBA. EARLIER THIS YEAR, AND PERHAPS TO SOME EXTENT EVEN YET, THEY HAVE TENDED TO SEE THE HAND OF THE USG BEHIND UNFAVORABLE ARTICLES THAT APPEAR IN THE US MEDIA. THAT THEIR WORST FEARS CONCERNING DESTABILIZATION HAVE NOT MATERIALIZED HAS SERVED TO CALM THEIR FEARS SOMEWHAT. WILLS, IN PARTICULAR, AT LEAST WHEN TALKING TO ME,

SEEMS SLIGHTLY EMBARRASSED ABOUT DESTABILIZATION CHARGES, YET
I SENSE SOME LINGERING SUSPICION EVEN WITH HIM
BLACKEN

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